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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY

DECEMBER 12, 2002

¶1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 12, 2002. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICS, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

¶2. HIZBULLAH DEFENDANTS CONVICTED

(Bolge) The State Security Court convicted six Hizbulah defendants for membership in and support to the illegal organization. Five of the defendants were sentenced to prison terms of 12 years and nine months (for membership) and the remaining one to three years and nine months (for support). The defendants were arrested during November 2001 anti-Hizbulah operations in Adana.

¶3. PKK SUSPECTS ACQUITTED

(Bolge) The Adana State Security Court acquitted Ismail and Hikmet Ocas, father and son, respectively, who had been arrested during an early-October anti-PKK operation in Ceyhan (Adana), in their first trial. The defendants had been charged with provision of support and shelter to the PKK.

¶4. ANOTHER EIGHT DEFENDANTS RELEASED IN MERSIN NEWROZ CASE

(Bolge) The trial of another 16 of the 148 defendants charged with "illegal demonstration," "pro-PKK slogans" and "assault against security forces" during the unauthorized Newroz celebrations in Mersin continued in the Adana State Security Court on December 11. Eight defendants who were being tried in custody appeared for the trial, denied the charges against them and requested their release. Their attorneys also claimed their clients were not at the scene to participate in the celebrations. The court then ordered the release of these defendants and adjourned the trial until a later date.

¶5. PKK COURIER

(Bolge) Izmir Security Directorate Anti-terror Squad police arrested PKK courier Rojda Erdogan, for whom police had been searching because she was sending PKK sympathizers in Istanbul and Izmir to rural areas. Police determined Rojda had recently sent two people from Istanbul to rural Kiziltepe (Mardin). Rojda was arraigned in a local court where she was ordered to remain in custody.

¶6. RETURNNEES

(Milli Gazete/Evrensel) Nearly three months ago, 200 evacuees returned to Mazidagi's (Mardin) Yalinagac village under the Village Return Project. The village was evacuated in 1993 due to terror incidents. The Mardin Governor's Office provided the returnees with construction materials to repair their homes. Due to the shortage of construction materials, two families were unable to repair their homes and settled in the village school, which had been closed due to a lack of teachers.

¶7. PRO-OCALAN DEMONSTRATION

(Evrensel) In Batman, Democratic People's Initiative organized a December 10 demonstration to protest the isolation of PKK (KADEK) leader Abdullah Ocalan in which lights were turned off in homes for ten minutes. Youths later gathered in several districts of the province, lighting fires and shouting pro-Ocalan slogans. In Diyarbakir, hundreds of people burned tires and shouted slogans in support of Ocalan. They also

marched, carrying Ocalan posters and KADEK flags.

18. RADIO DUNYA OFFICIAL ACQUITTED
(Evrensel) The Adana State Security Court acquitted (Adana's) Radio Dunya General Broadcasting Director Sabri Ejder, charged with "inciting the public to hatred through appeals to racial discrimination" during an April (radio) program entitled "How can the Palestinian clash be solved?" The acquittal came when it was found out the person who spoke on the cassette turned out to be someone other than Ejder.

19. LANDMINE VICTIM'S GRIEVANCE
(Evrensel) Pervari (Siirt) shepherd Sabri Tunc, who lost his hands in 1996 when a landmine he had found while grazing his animals exploded in his hands, claimed he had been prevented from receiving food assistance provided by the Pervari Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SYDV), an affiliate of the District Governor's Office, because of his membership in the Democratic People's Party (DEHAP). Security officers reportedly prevented Tunc from meeting with the District Governor during the month of Ramadan, when SYDV distributed food products to poor people. Tunc, who is unemployed, alleged the District Governor's Office had sent him a letter stating he was not in need.

110. GAP REGION PUBLIC HEALTH PROJECT
(Turkiye) A survey carried out by Diyarbakir's Dicle University in 1,186 homes in nine provinces in the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) region showed 68% of homes in rural areas did not have toilets, 47% did not have bathrooms and 70% of residents were parasite carriers.

111. VAN SCHOOLS CLOSED
(Evrensel) According to the Van Health Directorate, schools in that province were closed for another three days due to a respiratory system epidemic. The schools were previously closed for two days for the same reason.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

112. KILIS GOVERNOR SEEKS SUPPORT FOR OPEN-AIR MARKET
(Turkiye) Kilis Governor Kutuk Aslan has left for Ankara to meet with several ministers to ask for support to the proposed open-air market at the Oncupinar border gate with Syria. Kilis expects a substantial contribution to the Kilis and the Turkish economies as a result of this market and transit passages through the border gate.

113. TPAO FINDS NATURAL GAS IN DIYARBAKIR
(Turkiye) During oil explorations in Silvan's (Diyarbakir) Ozluce village, the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) found natural gas 25 meters away from a well from which 300 barrels of oil are extracted daily. As there is no natural gas facility in the area, the gas is burning 24 hours, posing a threat.

HOLTZ